

editions of "The Freedom of a Christian Man" further made it evident that the would-be reformer was also the most popular of writers. Like Ulrich von Hutten, Luther could say, *Vivat libertas! Jacta est alea.*

And Luther proved his mettle in the arena of action as well as in the arena of controversy. When it came to the actual alternative of submission or rebellion he did not belie his creed, even when the papal bull was hurled at his head by Eck in September 1520. In December, in the presence of the Wittenberg students, and at the spot outside the Avails where the oak tree now casts its shade, he threw the papal bull into the flames. "Because thou hast vexed the soul of the Holy One of God, so may the eternal fire consume thee." Truly a heroic act, which proclaims in the face of Christendom that there was one man in the world who would no longer bow the knee to the Baal of papal tyranny. Reformer is too weak a word to designate this man, who, with all the force of a dogged nature, inspired as he firmly believed by God, thus braved the power of convention or conviction, which for a thousand years had made the pope a god on earth. If he is not at this moment a revolutionist, I know not what he is. For Luther, this so-called god on earth has no more authority to dictate than any other mortal. Christ is the only dictator that he recognises in matters of conscience. Nay, in matters of conscience he will not even give way to the emperor and the Diet, in whom the secular power of Germany is embodied. To no dictator, spiritual or temporal, will he submit, if the truth of God and the salvation of his soul are in question. The war to the knife with ecclesiastical tyranny, begun at Wittenberg, was continued at Worms, even in the presence of the pope's henchman, the mighty, imperial Charles V. At Worms, too, Luther stood before the august assembly of magnates, spiritual and temporal, presided over by the emperor, as the inflexible champion of the spiritual independence, the divine right, of the individual Christian. As a mere act of personal courage, his refusal to recant, like that of Hus at Constance, is splendid. The impressiveness of the scene is mightily enhanced when we see in the intrepid heretic the champion, not merely of himself but of the highest rights of humanity, of freedom of thought, liberty of conscience. What right has